

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,

DEEP CREEK ROAD

Between Park Boundary near Bryson City and Deep Creek Campground

Gatlinburg Vicinity

Sevier County

Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-K

HAER
TENN
78-GAT.V
6K-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Department of the Interior

P.O. Box 37127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HAER NO. TN-35-K

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Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
North Carolina, between park boundary
near Bryson City and Deep Creek
Campground

Date of Construction: ca. 1845 (improvement construction by
NPS in 1930s-60s)

Type of Structure: Roadway, Bridges, and Landscapes

Use: National Park Transportation System

Engineer: U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and National
Park Service

Fabricator/Builder: Various private and public contractors

Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior,
National Park Service, Great Smoky
Mountains National Park

Significance: The transportation system of Great Smoky
Mountains National Park is
representative of NPS park road design
and landscape planning throughout the
country. Much of the work, including
that of Deep Creek Road, was undertaken
by the Civilian Conservation Corps
during the 1930s.

Project Information: Documentation was conducted during the
summer of 1996 under the co-sponsorship
of HABS/HAER, Great Smoky Mountains
National Park, the National Park Service
Roads and Parkway Program and funded
through the Federal Lands Highway
Program. Measured drawings were
produced by Edward Lupyak, field
supervisor, Matthew Regnier, Karen

Young, and Dorota Sikora (ICOMOS intern, Poland). The historical reports were prepared by Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher. See also drawings and histories on related structures: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN-35; Newfound Gap Road, TN-35-A; Clingmans Dome Road, TN-35-B; Little River Road, TN-35-C; Cades Cove and Laurel Creek Roads, TN-35-D; Foothills Parkway, TN-35-E; Cataloochee Valley Road, TN-35-F; Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, TN-35-G; Big Creek Road, TN-35-H; Northshore Road, TN-35-I; Cosby Park Road, TN-35-J; Greenbrier Road, TN-35-L; Heintooga Ridge and Balsam Mountain Roads, TN-35-M; Cataloochee Trail and Turnpike, TN-35-N; Rich Mountain Road, TN-35-O; Elkmont Road, TN-35-P; Loop Over Bridge, TN-35-Q; Smokemont Bridge, TN-35-R; Elkmont Vehicle Bridge, TN-35-S; and Luten Bridges, TN-35-T.

Introduction

Deep Creek Road is a short 2-mile road which provides access to a campground, picnic area, and trailheads in the south section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, approximately two miles north of Bryson City, North Carolina. A paved road enters the park along Deep Creek, following the stream a short distance to the north, where the pavement ends and the road becomes surfaced with gravel. Here, the road turns away from Deep Creek and travels east to exit the park and meet another road leading from Bryson City.

Deep Creek Road

Settlers arrived in the Deep Creek area in the 1840s or 1850s, and built a primitive road to the various homesteads located along the stream.¹

In 1933, the Park Service planned to construct a 6.5-mile road up Deep Creek.² A spur road was also planned for Indian Creek. Difficulties were foreseen in the construction of the

¹ Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

² Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

road, particularly with respect to drainage structures, as the creek "meandered from one side to the other" of the narrow Deep Creek Valley.³ By August 1934, two road lines had been drawn for Deep Creek. One, favored by the BPR, required three bridges, while the second, favored by the Park Service Office of Plans and Design, required seven bridges.⁴ In November 1935, the CCC began reconstruction work on the "old road up Deep Creek."⁵ The project was completed in August 1936, and the road was used by the Park Service as a truck trail.⁶

Lacking visitor facilities, Deep Creek attracted only hikers, and was a quiet section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park until the Park Service began to develop the area in the 1950s. The area was inspected for the site of a possible campground by L.A. Wilhelm of the Park Service in May 1952.⁷ The

³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1934; GSMNP.

⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1934; GSMNP.

⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1935; GSMNP.

⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1936; GSMNP.

⁷ Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1952; GSMNP.

construction of a campground at Deep Creek began in September 1953,⁸ but was put on hold soon after work began.

New plans for the campground were drawn up in September 1959, when the Park Service was trying to decide whether it would be a campground which cars could be driven into, or a "walk in" campground in which cars had to be left at a parking lot outside the camping area.⁹ Work started on a drive-in campground on June 16, 1960,¹⁰ and was completed in December,¹¹ with further construction completed on August 30, 1962. At this time, Park Superintendent George Overly reported that the "obliteration of the old road" through the area had begun.¹²

With the new campground completed, the road into Deep Creek was improved and a new bridge over the creek constructed. This \$39,215 project, was begun by the Hart Construction Company of

⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1953; GSMNP.

⁹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1959; GSMNP.

¹⁰ Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1960; GSMNP.

¹¹ Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1960; GSMNP.

¹² Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1962; GSMNP.

Sevierville, Tennessee in July 1961,¹³ and was completed on November 20.¹⁴

Following the completion of the Deep Creek campground, visitation to the area increased. As a result, in 1967 a proposal to build a motor nature trail for either Deep Creek or adjacent Indian Creek was drawn up. Park Service Director George Hartzog supported the idea of a motor nature trail on Indian Creek, and believed that "in the matter of one-way roads and motor nature trails," Great Smoky Mountains National Park set an "example" for the national park system.¹⁵

Work began on the Indian Creek Motor Nature Trail in March 1968 by enrollees in the Job Corps, a federal antipoverty program intended to provide employment and training for disadvantaged youth.¹⁶ The program began in 1964 as part of President Johnson's Great Society, and a Jobs Corps Center was established

¹³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1961; GSMNP.

¹⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1961; GSMNP.

¹⁵ Staff Meeting Minutes, January 23, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

¹⁶ Staff Meeting Minutes, March 5, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

in Great Smoky Mountains National Park near the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. In addition to the construction of the Indian Creek road, Jobs Corps enrollees participated in other projects in the park.

The first section of Indian Creek Motor Nature Trail was completed in October 1968.¹⁷ By April 1969, 2.5 miles of the second section had been cleared and were ready for surfacing with gravel.¹⁸ Work on Indian Creek Motor Nature Trail was halted in December, and the Park Service recommended that the project be completed by a contractor.¹⁹ The project was never continued, and the incomplete roadway was converted into the Indian Creek Motor Trail.²⁰

¹⁷ Staff Meeting Minutes, October 1, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

¹⁸ Staff Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1969; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

¹⁹ Staff Meeting Minutes, December 12, 1969; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

²⁰ Defoe, *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*, 292.

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